Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 9, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC

Dear President Trump:

We write with great concern over your decision to withdraw U.S. troops in northern Syria in advance of a Turkish operation into area controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

We believe your decision to withdraw U.S. personnel from the area will have far-reaching diplomatic and national security implications: it will dramatically alter our partnership with the SDF, allow unilateral Turkish incursions into Syria, and jeopardize counter-ISIS efforts. Furthermore, it introduces uncertainty into U.S. foreign policy that will cause current and future allies to question the reliability of the U.S. as a partner.

On Monday, October 7, in response to bipartisan criticism, you posted a statement on your Twitter account that read: "...[i]f Turkey does anything that I, in my great and unmatched wisdom, consider to be off limits, I will totally destroy and obliterate the Economy of Turkey[...]" However this morning, the Turkish military with the Syrian National Army began conducting attacks targeting Kurds in northern Syria, including border towns and the SDF - our longtime allies in the fight against ISIS. This chain of events, including the announcement, subsequent clarification, and now the Turkish invasion has had a chaotic and destabilizing effect on an already fragile situation. It has thrown our troops, and our partners on the ground, into disarray.

We cannot invite further instability in this region. For one, the SDF maintains custody of over 11,000 ISIS fighters in detention facilities across northeast Syria. Moreover, the decision leaves U.S. assets and personnel in Syria -- principally, at al-Tanf -- embroiled in uncertainty.

In order to assess the decision making process that underpins your announcement, and the national security implications, we request answers to the following questions:

1. Where are the U.S. personnel in northern Syria being repositioned and how will that withdraw affect the overall force level of U.S. personnel in Syria?
2. What additional troop withdrawals or other changes to the disposition of U.S. forces in Syria are planned within the next six months?
3. How will the U.S. ensure the protection of Kurdish civilians and our SDF allies?
4. Consistent with your tweet on October 7, what standards are you using to determine actions that are "off limits"? What authorities and means would you use to "destroy and obliterate" the economy of Turkey, a NATO ally?
5. How will the more than 11,000 ISIS prisoners held by the SDF be secured if the SDF are forced to reposition their resources for defensive purposes? If their care is to be transferred to another entity, how will the U.S. ensure an orderly transfer of custody?

6. How does the movement of U.S. personnel affect the operational security assessment of the al-Tanf garrison? How will the U.S. ensure the continued protection of the al-Tanf garrison?
7. On October 4, U.S. and Turkish forces conducted the first joint patrol of a buffer zone in northeast Syria. What information led to the decision to abandon this effort after only one patrol?
8. What assessments have been done to analyze the effect of this decision on the ongoing counter-ISIS mission?
9. What preparations has your administration made with our allies in the counter-ISIS mission in advance of this decision?
10. What assessments have been done to determine the effects of a U.S. withdrawal in northern Syria on Syrian government, Iranian, and Russian military forces operating in the region?

One of our country's greatest strengths is the diversity of our allies and partners that are willing to fight alongside us in times of conflict. Our allies commit their lives and livelihoods to our common cause and place immense trust in our unwavering dedication as a reliable partner. This decision jeopardizes decades of trust in American solidarity and will only serve to undermine current and future alliances.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

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JASON CROW
Member of Congress

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JIM COOPER
Member of Congress

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JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

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JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member of Congress

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ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress

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RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

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FRANK PALLONE, Jr.
Member of Congress

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JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress

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COLIN Z. ALLRED
Member of Congress

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ANDRÉ CARSON
Member of Congress

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SEAN CASTEN
Member of Congress

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GILBERT R. CISNEROS, Jr.
Member of Congress

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JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

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ANGIE CRAIG
Member of Congress

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MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

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VICENTE GONZALEZ
Member of Congress

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ANTHONY G. BROWN
Member of Congress

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ED CASE
Member of Congress

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DAVID N. CICILLINE
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EMANUEL CLEAVER
Member of Congress

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TJ COX
Member of Congress

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SHARICE L. DAVIDS
Member of Congress

SUZAN DELBENE
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VERONICA ESCOBAR
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BILL FOSTER
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SUSIE LEE
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